

## Campstead Easements

The Squam Lakes Conservation Society (SLCS), begun in 1960, protects 68 properties and over 2,500 acres of land in the Squam watershed, including 16 miles of Squam Lakes shoreline. In 2004, the SLCS received its first campstead easement, the Kusumpe Brook Association camp in Sandwich. Campstead Easements combine a historic preservation model for the structures within a land conservation easement framework, thus conserving on-going low-impact use *and* sensitive shoreline habitat.

In Derek Bereton's Kinship and Landscape at Squam Lake, a dissertation published in 2003, 71 "old rustic camps" were studied at Squam. The main theme of Derek's work was that campsteads hold a significant place in our character, history, and sense of community. There are 68 pre-1920 camps still in use today. The criteria for a functioning Squam campstead are:

- Summer seasonal use only
- Rustic setting "Too fancy is not camp"
- Land is significantly under-developed (less than 20% of the total).
- Camp is well established (at least 50 years old).
- They have long served as a family hub

In March of 2006, the Richard and Marcia Allen family donated the second Squam campstead easement, placing their 1894 camp and accompanying 6 acres into conservation. In 2007, the Kirk family donated a campstead easement on Squam's second oldest camp (1886). In short, the SLCS is promoting a relatively low-impact land use pattern while sustaining the cultural landscape that has long defined Squam Lakes.

The effort to conserve and preserve campstead is significant at three levels:

1. From the perspective of those who gain scenic enjoyment of the shoreline from a distance, the waterfront appears natural and largely undeveloped. Campstead residents enjoy a moderately dappled view of the lake through the border of trees and shrubs at water's edge. It is this "peephole effect"<sup>1</sup> that is so desirable with regard to preserving Squam Lake's native beauty and image.
2. It is in stark contrast to the unrelenting pressure of "highest use" development.
3. Finally, campstead easements is a laudable testament to the Squam's ethos of conservation and preservation, and of utmost importance, a willingness to achieve an unselfish balance between personal enjoyment and public good that is relatively uncommon in today's society. This balance may well become precarious as succeeding generations assume ownership of the property.

### NEXT STEPS

Thematic registration of Squam as a National Historic District; significance of campsteads.

The "Campstead Test":

1. If conserved, what are the families giving up?
  2. If conserved, how will the town treat the adjusted values?
  3. What value does the community place upon low-impact camps?
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